

How to Hold Your Child during Vaccinations

Parents and caregivers play an important role during an office visit when children receive vaccines. They can soothe and comfort their children, making them feel safe and secure. Parents also can help with the safe delivery of vaccines by securely holding children when shots are given.

A parent's embrace during vaccination offers several benefits. A comforting hold:

- Safely prevents children from moving their arms and legs during injections
- Avoids frightening children by embracing them rather than overpowering them
- Encourages parents to nurture and comfort their child
- Allows the health care professional steady control of the limb and the injection site

Different holds are needed depending on the age and size of the child. The steps below detail how parents can support their child and make the vaccination process less stressful on them and their children.

For **Infants and Toddlers** who are getting a vaccine in a leg, parents can:

1. Hold the child on their lap.
2. Place the child's arms under one of their own arms and around their back and apply gentle pressure for a secure, hug-like hold.
3. Use their free arm and hand to hold the child's other arm gently but securely.
4. Anchor the child's feet firmly between their thighs.



For **Older Children** who are getting a vaccine in an arm, parents can:

1. Hold their child on their lap, or have the child stand in front of the seated parent.
2. Embrace their child during the process.
3. Anchor both of the child's legs between their thighs.

Note: The comforting holds outlined above are suggestions, not guidelines. Some health care professionals may prefer to use different holds or have the child on the exam table when administering immunizations.

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) adapted this information from *Comforting Restraint for Immunizations*, California Department of Public Health Immunization Branch.